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Pond Lily Dam Removal in New Haven Begins

New Haven, Conn. – Elected officials, conservationists, and civic groups came together in New Haven today to celebrate the beginning of work on the [Pond Lily Dam removal project](#), located along the West River in Connecticut. The more than \$800,000 project, administered by Save the Sound, a bi-state program of Connecticut Fund for the Environment and funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Natural Resource Conservation Service, will reduce downstream flood risks and restore fish passage and habitat on 2.6 stream miles and 76 acres of Konold's Pond habitat for herring, eel, and shad.

This federally funded Hurricane Sandy resilience project, located in the New Haven Land Trust's Pond Lily Nature Preserve near the intersection of Whalley Avenue and Amity Road on the New Haven-Woodbridge border, will eliminate the danger of catastrophic flooding from a dam breach during future storms. The assessment and removal of the dam are funded through the Disaster Relief Appropriations Act of 2013, which provided the Service with nearly \$102 million in federal emergency funding for Hurricane Sandy recovery to strengthen natural defenses that can help protect Atlantic Coast communities against future storms. Implementation of the dam removal is also funded by the State of Connecticut and Natural Resource Conservation Service.

“This project represents a huge win for the environment and for the local community through removal of a deteriorating dam that no longer has a useful purpose. Removing the dam and restoring natural river flows will allow the passage of migratory fish upstream, improve water quality, and prevent a potentially catastrophic failure of an old dam that's in very bad condition. Many people, bridges, and buildings downstream from this site will be safer once this structure is out,” **said Lori Benoit, fish and wildlife biologist for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.**

“We're pleased to be partnering in such important work. This project is not only reconnecting the river, it's also bringing together the community,” **says Gwen Macdonald, director of habitat restoration for CFE/Save the Sound.** “This project builds on our successful restoration of 80 acres of marsh habitat in West River Memorial Park. Since then, the community has come together and developed the West River Watershed Management Plan, which identifies comprehensive solutions to the problems that face an urban river. Over time, we expect this dam removal to increase the ecological function and vibrancy of the river. Visitors to the Nature Preserve will be able to see the importance of removing barriers in rivers and ultimately feel a connection with their local watershed.”

“As more frequent, more severe weather becomes the new normal, we must evaluate our infrastructure to ensure our communities are prepared to withstand and mitigate the devastating effects of flooding,” **said Senator Richard Blumenthal.** “Removal of the Pond Lily Dam will provide much needed and long awaited protection to Westville businesses and residents, who have been plagued by repeated flooding. I am proud to support these efforts by Connecticut Fund for the Environment, Save the Sound, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and I will

continue to fight for federal funding for projects to ensure our state's infrastructure and ecosystems are prepared for the weather we now know to expect."

"I couldn't be happier that the post-Sandy relief funds we helped secure made this project a reality. After decades of waiting, the families and businesses in the Westville Village District can finally let out one big sigh of relief. Removing the Pond Lily Dam will comfort residents who have been threatened with flooding and reopen nearly three miles along the river, restoring fish populations in our rivers and Long Island Sound," **said Senator Chris Murphy**.

The risk of major flooding from a dam failure at Pond Lily has been a safety and economic concern for Westville Village District residents and business owners for many years. Removal of the dam protects nearby urban communities for the future, enhances fish passage for both migratory and river-dwelling species, and will create more than a dozen local construction jobs.

"We are thrilled about the dam removal both because of the resulting ecological benefits and because it will increase open space and trail access so more New Haven residents can enjoy this beautiful natural landscape," **says Justin Elicker, executive director of the New Haven Land Trust**. After dam removal, the New Haven Land Trust will seek to expand access and trails in the Nature Preserve in which the dam is located. This project has already involved many local groups, led by the West River Watershed Coalition, who are committed to providing accessible, public and urban open space.

Other partners in the dam removal include the dam owner New Haven Land Trust (NHLT), Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP), City of New Haven, Town of Woodbridge, Solar Youth, Common Ground High School, Trout Unlimited, Restore America's Estuaries (RAE), National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership. These organizations are working together to educate and involve the nearby surrounding communities in the benefits of dam removal.

To read more about the Pond Lily dam removal project, [click here](#). To view photos of Pond Lily dam prior to removal, [click here](#). To learn more about other U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Hurricane Sandy recovery and resilience projects, [visit the Hurricane Sandy Recovery website](#). CFE/Save the Sound and USFWS are also partnering on a second dam removal project at Hyde Pond in Mystic, Conn. which will be deconstructed starting later in November.

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Save the Sound is a bi-state program of Connecticut Fund for the Environment with an established 40-year track record of restoring and protecting the waters and shorelines of the Sound. From its offices in New Haven and Mamaroneck, Save the Sound works for a cleaner, healthier, and more vibrant Long Island Sound where humans and marine life can prosper year-round. Our success is based on scientific knowledge, legal expertise, and thousands of ordinary people teaming up achieve results that benefit our environment for current and future generations. Visit www.savethesound.org for more information.